

# HOW THEY FOUND JESUS



IDA E. BAKER



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## **To My Three Sons**



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*Whither shall I flee from Thy  
presence?—Psalmist.*





## ONE

### JASON THE ZEALOT

**T**HE SOUTHERN SLOPE of a Nazarene hill was a scene of rare beauty. Crimson poppies and scarlet anemones were opening to the light, and the birds, swarming from the plains of Genesareth, sang in the trees on the hillside. In this scene of beauty stood the home of Jason, a Galilean Zealot.

The attractive surroundings of the home were in marked contrast to the pitiable conditions within. There was a bird in a cage, but the bird never sang. There were children in the home, but the children never laughed and played as other children did. There was a woman whom they called "Mother" but the light of love had faded from her eyes.

Jason was the leader of a sworn fraternity of Zealots who were determined

to release themselves from the bondage of Rome. His presence was destructive not only to the peace of his own home, but to the welfare of the community in which he lived. He scorned all forms of law and order, and aroused enmity among the inhabitants of the hill country. While the children quarrelled at their play, and the women wrangled over bits of gossip, the men fought in a war of words.

One evening they came to the floor of Jason's new granary for the usual discussion on the national situation.

"You've got a pretty nice storehouse here, Jason," Abda remarked.

"Yes, things look pretty good for me just now. That north field alone will yield a hundred fold."

The serious-minded Barkos was impatient of small talk:

"What good will it all do if the Romans come and take away our nation? We must be ready to fight to the very last man. We can't forget

our love for freedom, and our contempt of life without it. Who would live and be a slave?"

Abijah said he was not afraid of the Romans if the new Prophet didn't get too strong a following:

"We must remember the watchword of the fiery first Zealot, Judas, —'We have no Lord and master but God.' And now our people are running after this man, Jesus, and even now they are calling Him Lord and master. What does it mean?"

Namor was quick to answer:

"It may mean that we'll have to withdraw our forces from the Romans and turn them against the Prophet."

"Careful, young men" the old Kedar said. "I believe this Jesus is a Prophet of the most high God. I had a dream about Him last night. We must wait to see what He will do for the people. It may be that He

has been sent to deliver us from the Roman power.”

Jason’s word on all such questions was final:

“We’ll not trouble the Prophet if the Prophet doesn’t trouble us. But if He begins to line up with the Romans we’ll make short work of Him.

“And now I want to know who broke down the south-east corner of the fence I put around my cornfield. Gara, I believe you did it, for I saw your children playing with some of the boards off the fence.”

Gara was angry and pushed his neighbor against the wall of the building. Jason was angry and struck him.

“Shame, Jason, shame!” the aged Kedar said. “No true Zealot would strike a neighbor for so slight a cause as that.”

“Then let him learn to keep his hands off of me.”

The disturbance grew into a general brawl, the older men championing the

cause of Jason, while the younger men supported Gara.

When the men separated that night, Jason went to his house by way of the cornfield, and found the broken fence had been repaired. His wife explained that it had been broken by Amon's oxen that had become unmanageable.

There was a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee at which Jesus was a guest. When the supply of wine failed, He relieved the embarrassment of the host by turning water into wine. A young man named Amon who assisted the servants at the feast, lived in a home on the Nazarene hillside. He was a favorite with the household of the Zealot, and occasionally worked on his farm. One day, when he was ploughing in the field with Jason, he described the miracle that Jesus had performed:

"Nobody but the servants knew how the thing was done. He told us to fill the waterpots with water, and we filled them up to the brim. Then

He told us to draw it out, and take it to the governor of the feast. We did that, too. When the governor of the feast tasted the wine that was made from water, he said the host had kept the best wine till the last."

Jason hated Jesus because He preached a gospel of peace and righteousness. He believed, also, that the influence of His preaching was largely responsible for his own expulsion from the synagogue. At the same time he could not doubt the word of his young friend, nor dispute his statements regarding the wine. He attempted to dismiss the matter from his mind, but in spite of his best efforts to do so, he constantly reverted to the miracle, saying abstractedly,

"Strange about that wine at the wedding feast!"

Later in the day he announced his decision to Amon:

"I don't deny that Jesus performed a miracle at the feast, since you saw it for yourself, but curses on the

head of the Prophet, he performed that miracle by the power of the devil."

In matters of commercial interest, Jason was not influenced by national prejudice nor religious conviction. Only one question was considered: Would the deed react to his own financial advantage? When he knew that he would find a higher market for his cattle in Samaria than elsewhere, he went to Samaria.

He found the men of Sychar discussing the Prophet's visit to their city. Jesus had met the woman of ill repute at Jacob's well, and had revealed her history to her. This revelation strongly influenced the men of Sychar, and when they had listened to His teachings in the streets of their city, they declared boldly,

"We have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

This affirmation startled and annoyed Jason. Having sold his cattle, he hurried from the city in a painfully agitated state of mind. He recalled his conversation with Amon. Would Jesus ever know that he had cursed Him? What did the men of Sychar mean by saying He was the Saviour of the world? Could He save men? Could he save Jason, the Zealot? Embittered by his own reflections, he resolved to free himself from the sting of conscience by a return to the old life of evil. Arriving home, he cursed his wife, and chastised his children cruelly. He assaulted a respectable citizen who opposed his opinion, and turned his own mules into his neighbor's field. The process of wrong-doing only tended to increase his agitation. He lived in a state of mingled anger and fear.

He determined never again to see the Prophet, but the unavoidable Man was everywhere. He was in the synagogue preaching the truth of the new King-



dom. He was in the store, the shop, the office, the homes of the people, on the highroads and beside the sea healing all manner of diseases, curing the blind, the deaf, and the crippled, and casting out devils.

Jason was riding his mule on the highroad, and he saw the people crowding around the Phophet. Then he saw a leper kneel down before Jesus and heard him cry,

“If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

Jesus was moved with compassion, and touched him, and immediately he was healed.

Jason reflected:

“To turn water into wine must be hard enough, but how in the world a man could turn that decayed leprous flesh into pure, clean flesh like a child’s, is a mystery to me.”

That night Jason told the story of the leper to his wife, and remarked, half aloud,

“I’ll never curse that man again.”

Later, when taking a load of produce to market, he met a crowd of citizens from Nain, following a bier. The dead man was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Jesus was entering the city at that time, and when He saw the mother weeping He came and touched the bier. The bearers stood still, and Jesus commanded the young man to arise. He who had been dead sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

Great fear came on all who witnessed the miracle, and they glorified God, saying that a great Prophet had risen up among them.

For the moment, the spirit of joy possessed Jason, and he united with the multitude in thanksgiving.

The Zealot bought a field adjoining his farm, and on the following day he sold a strip of the land for more than he had paid for the field. The success of this transaction had a mellowing ef-

fect on his conduct. He was kind to his children, and even suggested that his wife go, occasionally, to the synagogue.

His wife, of a mystical turn of mind, attributed the change in her husband's conduct to the influence of the distant Prophet, and urged him to go to Capernaum to hear Him preach.

"Do go, Jason, please. We know He turned the water into wine, for Amon saw Him do it. And you saw Him heal a leper and raise a dead man to life. He's in Capernaum now. Will you go, dear, please?"

At any other time a suggestion to go to hear the Prophet preach would have angered the man beyond control. Now, however, he could take the journey to Capernaum under pretence of going to transact business in connection with his newly purchased property, and while in the city he would find the Prophet.

On Jason's arrival in Capernaum, the city, as usual, was lively with activities. There was stir among the

centurions and their soldiers of the garrison, and a large staff of tax collectors. Jason had not considered the seriousness of the situation, and carelessly strayed into the garrison. For twenty-six years he had led his secret forces against Roman authorities. Now as he stood in the presence of the Roman commanding officers, and saw the pomp of their bearing and the glitter of their arms, his face was livid with rage. When a soldier spoke roughly to him, he yielded to uncontrollable passion, flinging violent invectives at the guard standing near. An officer ordered his immediate arrest:

“Proof enough! This is Jason the Zealot, the man we have been looking for. He will not instigate another revolt very soon. Keep him in number seven.”

A centurion who had been secretly influenced by the miracles of Jesus, came into Jason's cell. He found the prisoner reflecting on his long life of

evil, and tortured day and night by pangs of remorse. The centurion spoke kindly to him, and asked why he had come to Capernaum.

“I came to hear the Prophet preach. A young man, who used to work for me, saw Him turn water into wine, and I, myself, saw Him raise a dead man to life. If I could only find Him now, He might forgive me for cursing Him.”

The centurion laid his hand on the bowed head:

“Courage, man, courage! Do your best, take your food, obey orders, and you will find the Prophet and He will forgive.”

When Jason was liberated, he saw a great multitude surrounding One who, the people said, was performing miracles. Pushing his way through the throng, he came in sight of Jesus who was casting an unclean spirit out of a man who was both blind and dumb. The scribes charged Jesus with casting

out devils by the prince of devils. His reply was the caustic question:

“How can Satan cast out Satan?”

The impulsive Jason, deeply convicted of sin, was prepared to appropriate the Master's question to himself. How could Satan cast Satan out of the heart of a rebellious Zealot? Only the power that could turn water into wine, and raise the dead could work such a miracle.

“I am tortured by my sins. The powers of hell are battering my wretched soul. There is no hope of deliverance for me.”

When the multitude had scattered, he retired to the shadow of a great tree, and passed his hours of darkness alone. Exhausted with a night of conflict, he slept. When he awoke, gleams of morning sunlight were gilding the hillside, and hope was warming his soul.

Jason was a man of sudden resolve and immediate action. Consequences were not considered. Hence the hours

of soul agony were not long continued. There was a sudden dropping to the depths of despair, then a joyous rising on the high tide of assurance that Satan had been cast out. This assurance was followed by moments of slipping back to the old impulses, then a wrestling forward to holier ones; by a brief resistance to another's control of his life, then a glad yielding to the will of the Prophet.

Returning to his home, Jason opened the door with a trembling hand. The resistance he feared melted into words of welcome:

“O, mother! Come quick. Here's father.”

“Well, well, my dear! You're home at last. Sit here by the coals. It's chilly tonight. Elizabeth, put the kettle over, please, your father will be hungry.”

The sight of the man's happy family around him opened the fountain of emotion, and he wept bitterly. While his

wife and children were smiling and weeping by turns, he described his journey to Capernaum, his arrest at the garrison, his days and nights of remorse, the Prophet's miracle of casting out the evil spirit, his own night of wrestling with the powers of hell, his assurance of forgiveness, and his unbounded joy.

The sunny days came, and the bird in the cage sang his sweetest songs. The children laughed and danced in merry play, and love-light beamed again in the eyes of the happy mother. The dove of peace had built her nest in the home of Jason the Zealot, and law and order reigned in the hillside community.



*Circumcised the eighth day, of the  
stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin,  
a Hebrew of the Hebrews.*

—PHILIPPIANS



## TWO

### THARAH THE HEBREW

**H**IS FATHER WAS A JEW who had transmitted to his offspring a deep respect for Hebrew tradition and religious ceremonial. His mother was a Greek. From her he had received a high mentality, and a desire for something more spiritual than religious externals, and more enduring than commercial values.

Possessing the caution of the Jew and the inquisitiveness of the Greek, he experienced many a conflict in arriving at a decision either to accept or to reject the teachings of Jesus.

His mother recognized a beauty of character in Jesus not found in other men, and occasionally referred to Him as a revealer of truth. His father was greatly agitated:

“Now, Tharah, don’t talk about revelation. After four hundred years of silence, if Jehovah had wished to reveal Himself to mankind, He would not have spoken through an ignorant, despised Nazarene, hated by all the great rulers of our nation. The farther you keep from that impostor, the better for your future prospects.”

The conflicting opinions of Tharah’s friends increased the haziness of his thought. In order to believe in Jesus, He must know Him as more than an estimable character, more than a revealer of truth, and more than a performer of miracles. He must know Him as a Deliverer from the evil that enthralled mankind. The weight of the world’s sin pressed heavily on him. Would there never come a Prophet with power to lift men from sin to purity and goodness?

Jesus had been driven from Nazareth, and made His home in Capernaum.

One day Tharah walked to the Master's house, hoping to have a glimpse of the majestic figure he had seen on the high-roads and beside the sea. A great crowd had gathered in front of the house. On the roof, four men were taking up the tiles, in order to let a sick man down into the presence of Jesus. From the open room, Tharah heard the words, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," and he saw the palsied man take up his bed and walk away perfectly healed. That Jesus had cured the sick man was evident. Could Tharah believe that He had cleansed his soul from sin? There was an influence in even this possibility that drew Tharah nearer to the Prophet.

Jesus was sitting at a feast in the house of Levi the publican. Long lines of the uninvited stood about the room, enjoying a sight of the festivities and listening to the words of the Prophet. Attracted by the crowd of spectators that waited outside the banqueting

hall, Tharah approached and heard the Pharisees complaining because Jesus was eating with publicans and sinners. He heard also the assuring voice of Jesus,

“I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Tharah repeated the words, “Sinners to repentance!”

Did the Prophet know of all the evil there was in the world? Had He the power to forgive the sins of men? A faint gleam of faith was warming his soul.

A friendly Pharisee came to Tharah's office and reported a strange incident he had witnessed in the home of one of his friends:

“You should have been at Dotham's table yesterday. He had invited Jesus to have dinner in his house. While we were eating, a woman came in carrying an alabaster box of ointment, and anointed the Prophet's feet. She washed his feet with her

tears, and kissed them and wiped them with her hair. We thought Jesus would thrust her away in anger, for she was a sinner. He said her sins were many but she loved much, and then He turned to her and said, 'Thy sins are forgiven. Go in peace.' "

When alone, Tharah, reasoned seriously:

"Who but God can forgive sin? Either Jesus deceived that woman and her sins were not forgiven, or the Prophet is so related to God that He has power to forgive sin. Knowing Jesus even as imperfectly as I do know Him, I cannot believe that He would deceive a sinful, sorrowful woman."

As the son of an influential citizen, Tharah enjoyed an intimate friendship with Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. When the ruler's young daughter was dead, he went to the home to comfort the parents and to weep with them.

While the professional minstrels were playing their weird, heart-breaking music, Jesus passed through the rooms to the upper chamber where the dead daughter was lying. He took the young girl by the hand, and commanded her to arise. She arose immediately and walked.

Overjoyed, Tharah went at once to his friends, the scribes and Pharisees, to report the miracle. A storm of bitter accusation followed. Sheminah who exerted a powerful influence over the rulers of the synagogue, spoke in angry tone:

“Young man, you must know that this fellow is an impostor. He has deceived Jairus and his young wife, pretending to work a miracle on their daughter who, I believe, was not dead at all.”

“Your pardon, Sir! I myself looked on the lifeless form and the cold, white face, and I know the damsel was dead.”



Joram pushed to the front of the company, and shouted with defiant gesture:

“Do you presume to teach an Elder in Israel? If the damsel was dead, then more shame to the Nazarene. He has raised her to life by the power of the prince of devils.”

Nathan threw his arms wildly and shouted,

“Tharah, if you are following this deceiver, you are betraying our nation into the hands of the Romans. Why doesn't the governor, Pilate, lay hold of him, and stop his wild adventures? Simply because he knows the impostor is working in the interests of the Roman power.”

One of the group of objectors was a lawyer held in high repute by the Pharisees. Tharah was a frequent guest in the lawyer's palatial residence. He was charmed with the beauty of the home appointments, the rich, Tyrian

hangings, the quaint, artistic bits of furniture, the musical instruments,—the harp, the timbrel, the cymbals and the plaintive oboe. He was more charmed with the lawyer's young daughter, and one night his betrothal to the beautiful Thersa was celebrated with music and dance.

At the close of Tharah's visit to Thersa, following the miracle in the home of Jairus, the lawyer led him aside and spoke kindly,

“My son, I am grieved that you are being deceived by this impostor. Go not after Him again and speak no more of Him, lest you break forever the tie that binds you to the daughter of my house.”

The bitter opposition to the Prophet did not weaken Tharah's faith in Jesus as a worker of miracles. He was convinced that He had power over death. Other prophets, however, had possessed this same power. Elijah had brought to life the dead son of the widow of

Zarephath, and Elisha had raised from the dead the son of the Shunammite woman. Tharah's need was a Deliverer from the world's evil and the long wake of sorrow that followed it.

One day he went to Nazareth to do business with a merchant who had bought a consignment of goods from his wholesale house in Capernaum. When business matters had been disposed of, the Nazarene merchant referred to Jason, the Zealot:

"That's a man you ought to know. For many years he has made the Nazarene hill country a battlefield. One day he went to Capernaum to hear the Prophet preach. He wouldn't listen to Him around here where folks knew him. I don't know what happened, but the Romans got after him and he had a rough time. People say that Jesus cast an evil spirit out of him. Any way, since that time he's been as meek as Moses."

Tharah was interested:

“I have heard of Jason and his notorious deeds, and I should like very much to visit him.”

Following the merchant's directions, Tharah found Jason in his hillside home. The Zealot welcomed the guest in the traditional way, kissing him on one cheek and on the other. He brought water and washed his feet, and set food before him,—wine and milk, leavened bread and lamb stewed with the seeds of the cummin.

“My Nazarene friend was right” Tharah remarked.

“The spirit of peace is in this home, and these mountains are full of the horses and chariots of the Lord.” Jason answered impulsively,

“The Prophet has done it all. As soon as they let me out of prison I went to find Him, and He cast the evil spirit out of my life, just as He cast the devil out of the man in Capernaum. Ask my wife, who has

love and praise instead of curses heaped upon her. Ask my children, who have kisses instead of blows. Ask my neighbors, who have goodwill instead of hatred. Yes, the Prophet has done it all."

The transformation in the life of Jason made a final appeal to Tharah. He spoke with considerable emotion:

"The spiritual is of higher value than the physical. To save a soul from sin is a more convincing proof of divine power than to raise the dead. Jason, I see in your own life a release from sin. That release has brought peace to your own family and to the entire community. What greater evidence of the Prophet's relation to God that this,—His power to forgive sin and to purify a life from its influence?"

That night Tharah lived again the old struggle to maintain a distinct religious and national life. He had believed this possible only by the rigid ob-

servance of Mosaic law. He reviewed the endless category of Rabbinic traditions, the interpretation of which he had held as divinely sacred. Could he set over against this ancient revered form of religion the teaching of an ignorant Nazarene who claimed to be the Son of God? What would such an action involve?

It would involve the loss of his father's respectful support and his mother's loving sympathy. It would involve separation from a radiant maiden on whom he had bestowed his heart's best love. It would involve a blight of his business prospects, and ostracism from desirable society. More painful than all, it would involve a consciousness that he had sullied the memory of the great Lawgiver of his nation, that he had denied the faith of his fathers, and had forfeited a sacred inheritance.

The long night of spiritual darkness passed, and a new day dawned, a day

of light that enveloped the world: Tharah had found a Deliverer from sin. He experienced a thrilling exultation, and eagerly awaited an opportunity to declare his new-found faith. Early in the morning he went to the rulers of the synagogue and proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, and they cast him out.

The persecution did not weaken Tharah's loyalty to Jesus. On a visit to Jerusalem, because of his rash zeal for the Prophet, he was imprisoned.

When Jarius, still a ruler of the synagogue, heard of the imprisonment he immediately appealed to the Roman centurion, who at once dispatched the following letter.

“Camillus Dentalus;

To the most noble Pilate Governor of Judea. Greetings:

“I have been informed that Tharah, a resident of Capernaum, has been imprisoned for his zeal on behalf of one Jesus. I can say that this

superstition is not political. Knowing the man, I am sure he has done nothing against the Government. I am ready to stand for his good conduct, and will count it a personal favor if you will order his release.

“C. Dentalus, centurion in the garrison of Capernaum.”

On receipt of this letter Pilate was pleased to order Tharah's immediate release.



*Thou rulest the raging of the sea.  
When the waves thereof arise, thou  
stillest them.—Psalmist*



## *THREE*

### NAHOR THE FISHERMAN

**A**S A YOUNG MAN, Nahor did not take kindly to religious ceremonials. The dim light of the temple lamp was distorting to his vision, and priestly intonations fell harshly on his ears. He felt the urge for freedom, and constantly heard the lure of winds and waves. Leaving his home in Galilee he wandered to the seaport of Ptolemais. He found the port lively with marine activities, and enlisted for service on a ship sailing to the island of Cyprus. Although at first shocked by the roughness and vulgarity of the sailors, he soon became accustomed even to their oaths, and readily adopted their manners and language.

One day he signed on a merchant ship sailing from Salamis in Cyprus, with a cargo of copper ore bound for

Caesarea. When the ship was but a few hours at sea, a storm broke with sudden violence. The weather-beaten craft, heavy with her load of ore, struggled heroically to keep her course. The Captain ordered all hands at their posts but doubt and fear filled every heart. Nahor heard a Greek from the city of Corinth, calling on Poseidon. He had not drifted entirely beyond the influence of his early religious training. And, it occurred to him that his irreligious conduct might be the cause of the present storm. He recalled the story of Jonah. Perhaps if the sailors were to cast him overboard, the storm would cease and the rest of the crew would be saved. He had almost resolved to offer himself as a sacrifice when the vessel plunged uncontrollably over the breakers, parted at midship and sank.

Of the few who survived the wreck, Nahor drifted for a day on a broken spar of the ship, and was rescued by a

freighter sailing to the port of Ptolemais.

A pious Jewess in port, who had done many a good turn for sailor lads and was known as mother Elizabeth, received the storm-battered sailor and nursed him back to strength. She told him of the stories brought back by some who had visited the new Prophet. Many had gone to see and hear Him and to be healed. While Nahor was weak, he listened with interest, but when his full strength returned he resented the stories told by his benefactress.

He resolved to go inland to the little lake that nestled among the Galilean hills. On its shore he would build a cabin for himself, and live his own life and carry on his own business. Moreover, he would keep himself aloof from all the religious ceremonies of his boyhood. He would have nothing to do with scribes and priests and synagogues. He would live his own free life in his own free way,—free as the winds

that blew across the restless waters of Galilee.

In his cabin by the sea there was a fire of coals on which he broiled his fish, baked his cakes and stewed his herbs. A fishing net was spread out to dry, and the picture of a merchant ship riding a stormy sea, hung on the wall. A few earthen bowls stood on a low table, and his bed was a mat of rushes.

Many years of wrestling with the winds and waves of the mighty Mediterranean had made Nahor a king of the sea. He loved the night as the day, and the storm as the calm. He bought a boat and wrought successfully in the most extensive industry of the Province.

One morning when he had brought in a boatload of fish from his early catch, he sat on the beach sorting his fishes with careful discrimination. He kept the choice bream, the sheat-fish, the carp, the perch and the dog-fish, but he cast away the poisonous siluroids.

He had heard the fishermen talking about the Master's parable of the draw-net. When the net was full, the fishermen drew it to land, and sitting down on the shore, they gathered all the good fish into vessels, but cast the bad away. So at the end of the world, the angels would come and would separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire.

Turning to his heap of rejected siluroids lying on the beach, Nahor remembered the words of the parable, and experienced a pang of conviction. Would he be kept or cast away when the angels came to sever the wicked from among the just? Perhaps, after all, he should not curse the Prophet. Sometime, he might even place an extra fish on his coals to bake, in case he should come his way and need a morsel of food.

Jason and Tharah had been standing with the multitude on the seashore, listening to the parables of Jesus. While walking along the beach, they noticed

Nahor sitting at the door of his cabin, mending his net. They addressed him respectfully, but a reference to the Prophet angered him:

"I thought I was getting away from all this hateful Jewish religion, but it's thicker around these shores than anywhere else I've been. I've nothing but contempt for your Prophet's teaching."

Jason was always the first to speak:

"What do you know about our Prophet's teaching? You sit here and never hear a word He says."

"And what do you know about the great Pantheon at Rome, and the grand temple at Athens with its gods of purest gold?"

"Nahor, can the gods of Athens turn water into wine and raise the dead?"

"Maybe not, but you can't scare me with miracles. I don't take much stock in them, myself. Other men have worked miracles. They turned



the poisoned water into pure water so the men could drink it. They made an axe float like a boat, and they brought the dead back to life. But they didn't profess to be the Messiah nor the Son of God. They were just prophets, and that's all your man is."

Tharah added his testimony:

"My friend, we believe in Jesus not because of what He does, but because of what He is. It is His mercy, His tenderness, His love for purity and goodness, His pity for the weak and sinful, and His free forgiveness of sin that have drawn us to Him."

Nahor bustled about a little, and answered:

"Well, men, we're not going to wrangle any more about gods good or bad. You come down to the shore and see my boat. It's the prettiest craft that ever sailed the waters of

Galilee. I want to give you a nice, long ride."

The sky was clear and the water, quiet when the boat left the shore, but a great storm of wind rose suddenly, and the heaving sea threatened disaster.

Another ship, riding near, was struggling with the same tempestuous elements. In the hinder part of that boat, Jesus was asleep, with His head on a pillow. The apostles who rode with Him woke Him. He rose and commanded the wind and the sea to be still, and there was a great calm.

When Jason and Tharah saw the Master standing in the storm-tossed boat and heard His word of command, "Peace, be still!" they worshipped Him, but Nahor ridiculed:

"Galilee is only a speck of a sea, and that was a very little storm. It wouldn't be much of a prophet who couldn't quiet a wind like that. Let your Jesus brace Himself against a

storm on the great Mediterranean, when the billows are rolling mountains high, and shrieking winds are riddling the sails of a great ship,—let Him quiet a storm like that and I'll believe in Him."

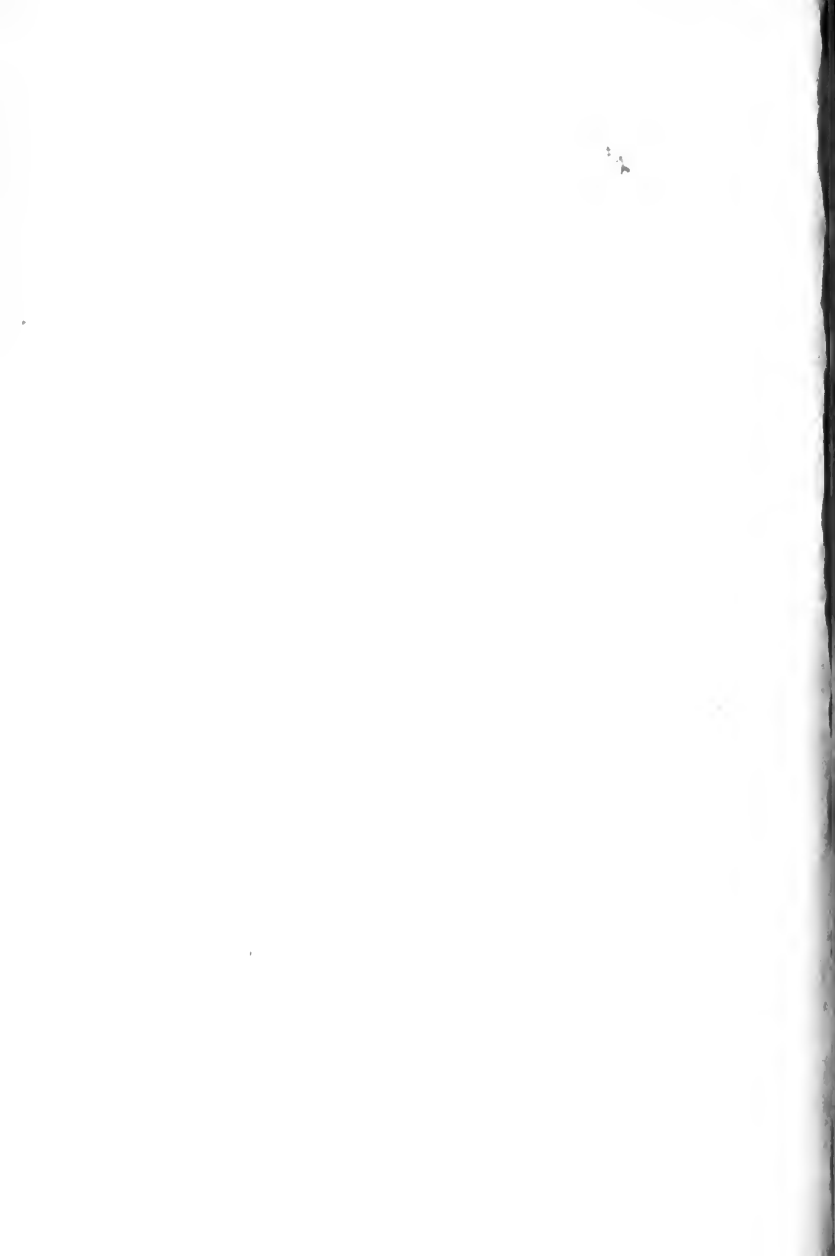
One quiet evening, the fisherman was riding in his boat in the light of a brilliant sunset. Before the red lines had faded from the west, the overhead sky grew dark with storm, and a cyclonic wind lashed the waters into fury. Nahor fought desperately to control his boat, and avert disaster, but his narrow sail was riddled, his solitary mast was broken, and the waves were pounding violently against the hull of his boat. He kept a straight course, until the craft was completely engulfed and he was left drifting on a bit of broken timber.

There were no gods of Athens to come to his help that night. He remembered that once Jesus had quieted the raging sea, and stilled the wild winds,

and he cried to Him for mercy. Jesus was in the mountains praying, and the only answer to Nahor's call was the shriek of the winds and the roar of the sea. He struck the on-shore billows with his strong arms, and pushing toward a beacon light, he reached the land safely.

That night the wind creaked the cabin in which Nahor lay sleepless and restless. Memories of the violent opposition he had shown toward Jesus distressed his mind. Had He gone, never to return? He rose in the fourth watch of the night, and stood beside the sea. A shaft of moonlight fell through the clouds, revealing the figure of the Christ walking on the wind-blown waters. The wind ceased, and Nahor cried, "O Master of winds and waves, forgive!" From that night he rode peacefully with the Captain of All Seas.

*Ye turned to God from idols to serve  
the living and true god.—First Thessa-  
lonians*



## FOUR

### HERMAN THE SYRIAN

**U**NDER THE BRILLIANT SYRIAN STARS, by the far-famed river Abana, two young people whispered their love and plighted their faith.

Herman and the fair Lyreah were born in Damascus, the most ancient city in the world. From early life, they came directly under Greek and Roman influence. They accepted the deification of such planets as Mars and Jupiter, and frequently participated in various forms of hero worship.

As Herman grew to young manhood, the early impressions made by a purely materialistic religion began to fade, and he was prepared for more spiritual conceptions. He became independent of his friend in his religious thinking.

Lyreah's religious convictions were

not strong, and she had no admiration for the Hebrews. She did have an appreciation of Grecian culture, and was content to find her feminine ideal in Aphrodite, the Grecian goddess of love and beauty. For her this was easy and natural, for Aphrodite represented a much purer ideal than Aristarte, the Phoenician goddess of love, whom Aphrodite had largely displaced.

One Sabbath day Herman entered the synagogue, and standing near the door listened to the reading of the prophets. He heard of One who was to be the desire of all nations, a Prophet of the most high God who would make the crooked straight and the rough places plain. He told Lyreah that the glory of the Lord would be revealed in a Prophet who was to come to Israel. She answered that she thought He was a long time revealing Himself.

Lyreah became more and more satisfied with her way of life, and Herman's longing for a clearer revelation of truth



became more intense. He heard rumors of a great Prophet who appeared in Galilee. Would Lyreah not go with him to find this Prophet of Israel? He made his final appeal with all the warmth and strength his great heart could command, but it was indifferently received. Herman loved Lyreah, but he loved truth more. A little walk with the peerless maiden, beside the river Abana and a sorrowful farewell! The Syrian stars paled, and Herman departed for his new life in Galilee.

One day when he was in the city of Chorazin in the interests of the fruit industry he had established on the plains of Gennesaret, a friendly merchant talked with him concerning the Prophet:

“You won’t find many people in the city of Chorazin who believe in Him. But to tell the truth, the Prophet does and says such wonderful things that we must, at least, think about Him. Where was He

born? In the town of Bethlehem, not very far from Jerusalem."

Herman wondered why a man born in Judea should be called a Galilean.

"For the simple reason that He is a Galilean. He lived all his early years in the little town of Nazareth, up there among the hills. I remember Him well when He was a boy. He used to go to the synagogue school, and, after hours, He worked at the bench with Joseph, and learned the carpenter's trade. As soon as He was baptized in the river Jordan, He came back here and began to teach the people and to work miracles. Those fishermen you see going around with Him, were all, excepting one, born right here in Galilee. He couldn't get out of this province if He tried. Look at the multitude that crowd around Him on the highroads. They bring all their sick and blind and lame and halt, and even those

possessed with worse devils, and He heals them all."

Herman questioned the merchant regarding the truth that Jesus was presenting to the people.

"I can't tell you much about that, Sir, for I've never heard Him preach. I believe He's in Nazareth now. If you were to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath you might hear Him for yourself."

On the following Sabbath Herman went to the synagogue. Jesus was to preach that day. When He stood up to read, the minister gave Him the roll of Isaiah, and He read:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Herman returned to his Chorazin friend:

“From your report of the Prophet’s teaching and miracles, I am forced to ask if this Jesus is not the Messiah of whom your prophet, Isaiah has written? It reads like that,—‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,’ then it goes on to describe the very things that Jesus is doing.”

Tharah’s extensive business necessitated frequent visits to the various cities of Galilee. One day while in Chorazin, he was introduced to Herman in whom he became deeply interested. The Syrian accompanied him to his home in Capernaum.

Having visited the magnificent synagogue building, the young men went to the city market. It was near the close of the day, and the place was noisy with preparations for departure. No one was buying. A disconsolate vendor still sat at her little stall, displaying her golden love-apples, the fruit of the

mandrake. She offered her apples pitiously to the few who passed by, but no one paused to inspect them. Tharah addressed her respectfully,

“Woman, have you sold any mandrakes yet?”

“Nay, my lord, and my children are crying for bread.”

Tharah bought the full store of fruit, giving the vendor twice its value in Roman coins.

While in the garrison, interested in the imposing Roman soldiery, the young men remained for a moment at the receipt of custom. The publican who occupied the seat vacated by Levi who was called to follow Jesus, was making effort to control the situation to his own financial advantage. A destitute widow knelt at his feet, praying for mercy. Angered at her importunity, the publican ruthlessly thrust her aside, demanding payment for the debt. Tharah approached and paid the widow's taxes. The Syrian remarked that there was

no such pity in the hearts of his gods.

The visits with Tharah were specially helpful to the Syrian. The men met on the plane of intellectual equality, each inspiring the other to an unrestrained expression of his thought. On the question of polytheism Tharah suggested:

“Think of it in this way, Herman. You are a strong, intelligent, beneficently-minded man. Now, supposing you were to break yourself up into many pieces, giving to each a quality which you now possess, but finding that, in the process of disintegration, you had deprived those parts of life, leaving them cold and hard and helpless. Where would be your power? The true God is not broken into many pieces. He is one perfect whole, in whom all power is centered.

“I see your argument, Tharah, but my difficulty is this: How can an individual God meet the many needs

of my complex nature? I am ignorant and I yearn for truth. I am lonely and I sigh for love. I struggle with unworthy impulses and I long to be free from these, and my physical needs require a variety of provisions. Tharah, do you know a God who can do all that?"

Tharah reflected a moment before answering:

"The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower. Herman, if one God can be all that to His people, He can do all that you require Him to do."

The Hill of Hattin reared its horny head midway between the town of Nazareth and the sea of Galilee. Herman often had climbed the long slope to rest and to meditate in the shadow of its cedars.

One day as he rested, there came

from the plateau above him, the sound of a voice he had heard on the high-roads of Galilee and on the sands of the little sea. As he listened, he thought the voice had a more tender quality than before, and the truth it uttered a deeper meaning.

He heard the *Beatitudes* fall from the Master's lips like a roll of music from a celestial world, — the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful and the pure in heart! As Jesus enunciated His long category of faultless ethics, the Syrian's soul enlarged, and his desire reached out to appropriate a divine ideal that grew out of the Prophet's utterances. In that radiant hour, what were his own cold, speechless gods, whose very forms were void of beauty!

Herman had grown to manhood in the country of Syria lying close to Phoenicia. When his business was satisfactorily established in Galilee, he went to Phoenicia to consider opening a branch of his fruit industry there.



While He was in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus took His journey to Phoenicia, where a Syrophoenician woman came to Him beseeching Him to cast an unclean spirit out of her daughter. Herman followed the crowd to the house where Jesus was speaking. While standing apart, he heard, through the open room the Master's utterance:

"It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs."

A Syrophoenician woman called a dog? The implication roused Herman to resentment and anger. This woman was his kin, could he pardon so gross an insult? He left the crowd and a period of bitter conflict followed. National sentiment and racial prejudice fought desperately to overthrow his feeble faith in the Prophet. Where was the love His former words had expressed? Where was the mercy His former deeds had revealed?

Later, when Herman learned of the Prophet's mercy to his kindred in Phoe-

nia, he was overwhelmed with gratitude. He held Jesus before his spiritual eyes. He saw His immeasurable pity for those who suffered and His boundless mercy for those who sinned. Beside Jesus he placed his former cold, broken, heartless gods. The contrast was overpowering. He turned from his long category of lifeless gods to yield himself to the will of one true God who, he now believed, was able to meet the needs of his complex nature, and who, henceforth, would be the sole object of his adoration.

*He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.*

—ISAIAH



## *FIVE*

### **ABIDAH THE SHEPHERD**

**F**OR NEARLY FORTY YEARS Abidah had tended his sheep in the hill country of Judea. He had led them to green pastures and still waters, and had guarded them from the assaults of ravaging beasts that lurked in hidden haunts.

One day when he was bringing his flock home to the fold, he saw a herd of goats usurping the sheep range,—the jet-black, dancing, bad-smelling goats! He knew that these strong, active animals would crowd the quiet sheep from the range, and would quickly devour every trace of vegetation. He protested to the herdsman:

“Away with these miserable goats! I have held this range for forty years, and you can’t crowd my sheep out now.”

“Forty years, eh? Well, old man, you’ve had it long enough. My goats are here to stay.”

A few harsh words were followed by blows. Young shepherds in the near-by fields came to the rescue of their beloved Abidah. They bound the herdsman, and drove the goats down a steep grade. When the intruder had sworn not to return to the range, they gave him his freedom, and assisted Abidah to his home.

Shocked and bruised, the aged shepherd lay in his bed for many days. The black-eyed Jewess who once was his joy in sorrow and his strength in weakness, was gone. The old man was alone with his sheep and a few neighboring shepherds who cared for him tenderly.

Housed and inactive, Abidah endeavored to console himself by repeating the Shepherd psalm. If he knew God, he must know Him as a Shepherd. If God was his Shepherd, He would restore his soul, and lead him into paths

of righteousness. Strength came with this comforting assurance.

When back again in the fold, he looked every night at the heavens, and thought of a wonderful star that he saw in the sky that night when the child Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Now as he stood in an open field looking intently at the planet Jupiter that was scintillating in wondrous lustre, he wondered:

“Why the unusual brightness of this star? Will a king be born to-night?”

When he slept that night, he dreamed, and in the morning he told his dream to the shepherds:

“I dreamed that I was walking on the highroads of Judea, and saw a wonderful star darting down a million rays of light. One whom the people called a Prophet was sitting at the roadside. He was healing the sick, and making the blind to see and the deaf to hear. People said He was

the Babe of Bethlehem, grown to be a Prophet. I must go at once to find Him."

The young men endeavored to dissuade their elder from taking the hazardous journey:

"You are too old and feeble to travel such steep, rocky paths, and wild beasts are lurking everywhere in the mountains. And O, Abidah! What if you never came back to us! How foolish we would be without your wise counsel!"

No argument could divert Abidah from his purpose. He would go at once to the highroads, hoping that somewhere he would find the fulfilment of his dream. Beseeching the young men to care well for his beloved sheep, he bade them an affectionate farewell.

Having made the journey from the mountains safely, he came to the sheep-fields in the vicinity of Bethlehem. The folds were still there, but the heavens were silent, and the young men who



tended the sheep never had heard of the Child who was born so long ago. They were kind to the old shepherd, and advised him to go to Jerusalem where he would learn if a Prophet had ever been born in Bethlehem.

The Feast of Dedication was being celebrated in Jerusalem, and Jesus was there teaching in the temple. A momentary sensation was created when Abidah, with hooded cowl and crooked staff, entered the sacred courts of the temple. From the time of David, shepherd life had been held as sacred to the Jews, and no one resisted the entrance of the old shepherd.

On that day, Jesus declared Himself to be the Good Shepherd who had come that His sheep might have life more abundantly. He knew His sheep and the sheep knew their Shepherd. There were other sheep not of that fold. These He must bring, and there would be one fold and one Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep.

Abidah's heart beat fast with joy. Was not this the one on whom, in his dream, the star was casting a million rays of light,—the Shepherd of Israel, born a Babe in Bethlehem and grown to be a Prophet? He longed to follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd, but Jesus went out of the temple, and when the Jews took up stones to stone Him, He went away beyond the river Jordan.

Herman the Syrian who, already had found Jesus, also attended the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. Having come from the court of the Gentiles, he saw the quaint, old shepherd standing near Solomon's porch. They talked together for a little while.

"Whoever this Jesus is" Herman said, "He is giving us a new and divine revelation of truth. His wonderful principles of ethics have never been dreamed of in my country."

Abidah thought only in pastoral terms:

“The Prophet I am looking for is the shepherd of His people. He will gather the lambs in His arms and carry them in His bosom. He knows the sheep from the goats. One day He will separate them and place the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left. I believe He is the Good Shepherd, but where can I find Him? They have driven Him away with stones, and nobody knows where He is.”

Returning to Bethlehem, Abidah learned that a Prophet called Jesus was teaching the people in Perea, and he immediately crossed the river Jordan into the eastern province. On the following day he joined a company of Pereans who were hurrying to the place where Jesus was speaking:

“What man of you having an hundred sheep if he lose one of them doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it?”

The blood coursed hotly through the shepherd's veins. Crowding to a nearer view of Jesus, he saw the ninety and nine safely sheltered in the fold, and the shepherd wandering in the wilderness to find the one that was lost. Then he saw the shepherd carrying the lone sheep home on his shoulders and heard the angels rejoicing.

As Abidah listened, enraptured with the story, his transition from the physical realm to the spiritual was rapid. He was no longer the shepherd leading his flock to green pastures and beside still waters, he was the lone, lost sheep on the mountains. Spreading his arms toward heaven, he cried rapturously,

“The Lord is my shepherd. I was lost, lost! but He has found me, and He is carrying me back to the fold in the arms of His love.”

The cultured people of Perea were interested in the quaint figure who walked their roads, and occasionally they visited him in his temporary abode

under a juniper tree on the banks of the river.

One night as the great red moon rose over Perean hills, a company of men came to the river and questioned Abidah concerning shepherd life in the mountains,—the usual size of the flock, the ferociousness of the beasts that threatened to devour them, and the safety and comfort of the fold. One enquired if it was true that a shepherd would give his life to save his sheep. Abidah snuggled against his juniper tree, and told his story:

“I’ll never forget Micanna, one of our young shepherds. A fine lad, he, and everybody loved him. One day he was leading his flock through a long gorge to the green pasture beyond, and he met a hungry wolf. The sheep were his own and he loved them. The only way to save them was to fight the beast himself. The sheep fled to safety, but in the awful

struggle that followed, the shepherd lost his life."

Looking into the future with prophetic eye, the aged shepherd said softly, as if telling a secret,

"I see the beloved Jesus and His flock surrounded by enemies more ferocious than wild beasts of the mountains, and one day the Good Shepherd will give His life for His sheep."

Returning from Perea, Abidah kept close to the multitudes that followed Jesus. He was eager to hear even the echo of a word from His lips, or to catch a far glimpse of His face.

One day when he was walking from Jericho and was near to Jerusalem, he became very weary of the journey and sat under a wayside tree to rest. He slept and dreamed that he was young again. His white hair had turned brown. His voice was strong like the voice of a young man, and he could run

and leap like the lambs in a near-by field. When he awoke, he said half aloud,

“That was a noble dream I had. And since the prophet has said ‘Your old men shall dream dreams,’ it may be that my dream will come true.”

Looking up he saw a great procession coming from Bethphage. The people were throwing their garments on the road over which Jesus was riding, seated on an ass. They were breaking branches from the trees, and waving them in the air as they shouted, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David.’ Other people were coming out of the city to meet the procession, waving palm branches and shouting hosannas. Abidah joined the company, shouting for joy. He saw the Son of David as the Shepherd of His people, surrounded by His loving, exulting flock. He was the very Shepherd who had found him lone and lost on the mountains, and had carried him back to the fold. As he

followed with the multitude, his strength was renewed. He mounted up with wings as eagles. He ran and was not weary. He walked and did not faint. As he entered the gates of the city with the triumphant procession, he smiled and said, "My dream has come true."



*Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?—ST. JOHN.*



## SIX

### BENAIAD THE RABBI

**O**F THE ARMY OF RABBIS officiating in the four hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem, none was more widely known nor more sincerely loved than Rabbi Benaiad. The synagogue was his world. He gave careful attention to the preservation of the buildings. He carried the keys of the ark or chest which contained the scripture rolls used in the Sabbath services, and trimmed the candles that burned on holy days.

The boys of the synagogue school were under the Rabbi's immediate care. To them he was not only teacher, he was brother and friend. The best Hebrew blood flowed through their veins. They were the hope of his nation, and worthy of his most serious

thought. He opened their minds to receive truth. He moulded their moral ideals and stimulated their spiritual aspirations. He filled their present life with joy, and planned their future with hope.

To his boys, the Rabbi was all that was good and great. They lived in the love-light of his eyes, in the kindly smile on his lips, and in the praise that dropped like a sweet song from his tongue.

A teacher himself, the Rabbi was more deeply influenced by the truths that Jesus taught than by the miracles He performed, and he listened frequently to His discourses. At the time of the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, Jesus was teaching in the temple and the Rabbi went to hear Him. He knew that the chief priests and Pharisees had sent officers to take Jesus, and he was surprised at his own concern for the Prophet's safety. What was this ignorant Nazarene to him?

It was the last day of the Feast. The Rabbi waited in eager expectancy. Would Jesus dare to speak to the people knowing that the Jews were seeking to destroy Him? Jesus stood and said,

“If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.”

Benaiad was thirsting for truth. Would he find the revelation in Jesus? He was thirsting for freedom. Would he find in Him the power to break the bonds of national tradition?

Having diligently sought opportunity to hear the Prophet, Benaiad listened to His story of the Good Samaritan. The parable created a hopeless situation for the Rabbi. Speaking to a stranger at his side:

“What does the Prophet mean by this exaltation of a Samaritan dog? Is salvation not of the Jews? What part will a despised Samaritan have in the kingdom of God?”

That night he slept little. When the morning light flooded his room, in spite of himself his heart was warming toward the Prophet, and he was even feeling kindly toward the Samaritan who had performed the act of love and mercy.

Benaiad was strongly influenced by the wider vision of the later prophets, and already he was feeling the bondage of Jewish law. He recalled the precept of the prophet Micah to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly before God. Love was the mainspring of the Rabbi's life. Since his habitual attitude toward all whom he met was beneficent, he was prepared, when in his normal mood, to appreciate a merciful deed even if performed by a Samaritan.

Returning to his home, he became conscious of the emptiness of a nationalistic religion that failed to meet the needs of men. He saw in Jesus a religious Leader who had, at least, reached the ideal of the prophet Micah to do

good to all men. Was He not the promised Deliverer of Israel?

The Rabbi spent the long night in agonizing effort to harmonize the prophecies concerning the Messiah with the facts of the life of Jesus. He reiterated, half aloud:

“The Messiah of whom the prophets have written is surely a King. Jesus is a poor, homeless man whose rostrum is the highroad, and whose throne is a boat on the sea of Galilee.”

In contrast to this, was Jesus not the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy,—growing up as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground, with no form nor comeliness and no beauty that we should desire Him? Was He not also the root of Jesse whom the Gentiles were seeking? Not only Jews, but people of all creeds and nationalities were following Him.

Worn with a night of wrestling, the Rabbi supported his head and recalled the time when, as a boy twelve years of

age, he heard the people talking about a star, and a song, and a Baby whose name was Jesus. He remembered, also, that Herod killed all the children under two years of age in his desire to destroy this Child. Why had he alone escaped? He recalled Micah's prophecy that out of Bethlehem should come One who was from everlasting, a Governor that should rule Israel. Was not this Child who was born in Bethlehem the fulfilment of this prophecy? Had Jesus not escaped the sword of Herod that He might wield the septre of Israel?

He turned again to the roll of Isaiah. Having read many times he soliloquized in a tone of triumph:

"Surely He can be no other than the Messiah of whom this prophet has written. The Spirit of the Lord is upon Him. He is preaching the gospel to the poor. He is healing the broken-hearted. He is setting the captive free and opening the eyes of the blind."



The foundations of Rabbinic traditions were tottering under Benaiad's feet, and enforced ceremonials were galling. Nevertheless, he was not prepared to make a complete break with Judaism. The decision was made for him. One day, when speaking to a friend concerning Jesus, he said,

"If this man is not more, He is not less than a Prophet of the living God."

His words were reported to the rulers of the synagogue, who brought them to the attention of the Sanhedrin. The Rabbi was at once summoned for trial. Caiaphas, the High Priest, addressed the accused,

"Rabbi Benaiad, do you admit having said of Jesus, the Nazarene, 'If this man is not more, He is not less than a Prophet of the living God'?"

"I do."

"Do you believe that this Jesus is the Messiah promised to the Jewish nation?"

After a brief moment of hesitation, the Rabbi answered deliberately,

“He seems to possess certain qualities of heart and mind, and to perform certain deeds attributed to the Messiah by the Prophets of Israel.”

The embittered assembly needed no further evidence of Benaiad's guilt. They agreed that he had practically acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, and they cast him out.

When it was known that Rabbi Benaiad had been cast out of the synagogue, a pall darker than ever covered the dead fell over the community near the eastern gate of the city. Business was paralyzed. Men stood with bowed heads. Women wailed in the streets. The boys in the synagogue school would have rebelled openly had they not been warned that the iron chains of Jewish law could not be broken. Helpless in their boyish sorrow, they rent their clothes, and threw ashes on their heads.

The heart-rending day came. The

last lesson was taught and the last admonition given. The boys in the synagogue school sat in their places, and their fathers occupied seats in the rear of the room. The elders were present, not to show respect for the retiring teacher, although they had loved him sincerely. They were there to watch his words lest an impression should be made that would need effacement.

When the daily routine of school work had been disposed of, the Rabbi addressed his boys:

“My beloved children, I must leave you. All that I have taught you of love and truth, of goodness and honor, cherish as you cherish your lives. The memory of the golden hours spent with you will be my comfort and solace until the end of life. May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob be with you and bless you with peace and prosperity. Farewell, and again farewell!”

The boys stood while the Rabbi spoke. As they marched in front of the teacher's rostrum they bowed respectfully, and left the room choking with tears and sobs. When the last figure had disappeared from view, the Rabbi removed his cloak and cap, the insignia of office. Having folded them tenderly, he laid them on the table at which he had sat for fifteen years, and went out into the darkest night that ever enveloped a Hebrew outcast.

News of the Rabbi's expulsion from the synagogue spread rapidly. When Tharah heard of the sorrow of his friend, he went at once to Jerusalem to comfort him. They kissed each other and wept together. A common sorrow bound their hearts in fellowship that only death could break.

They went at once to Perea where Jesus was teaching his soulful parables of seeking the lost. He was near the close of His earthly life, and the physical needs of men paled in the light of

their greater spiritual needs. There was less of miracle, and more of teaching the immortal truths of the Kingdom.

Having arrived in Perea, the Rabbi and Tharah found Jesus seated on a grassy elevation from which He was teaching the people. They listened to His parable of the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, and of Lazarus lying at His gate, full of sores, begging for the crumbs that fell from his table. They saw the beggar carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, and heard the cry of the rich man that Lazarus might be sent to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue.

They listened as Jesus pictured the prodigal son returning from a far country where he had wasted his substance in riotous living. They heard of the father's kiss of welcome, the best robe, the ring, the shoes and the fatted calf, and the merry-making, because

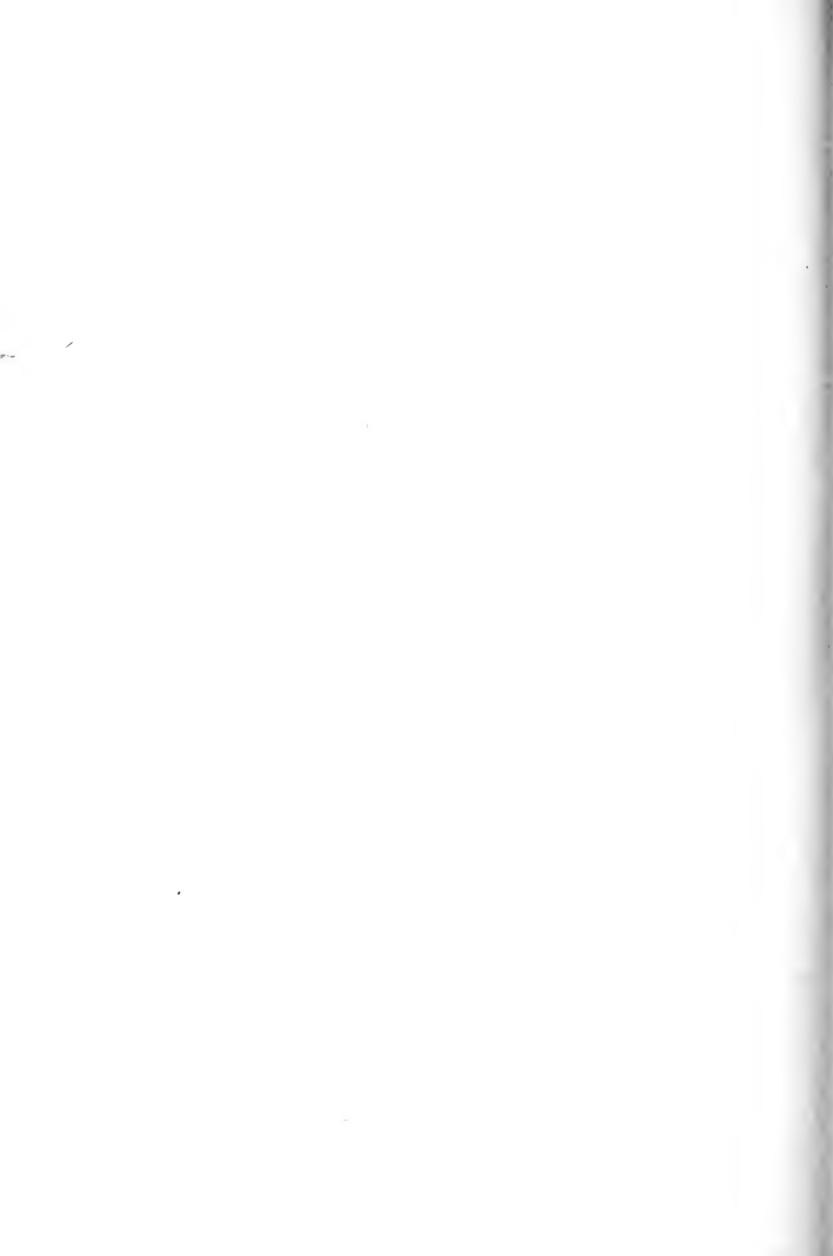
the son who had been dead was alive again, and he who had been lost was found.

The allegorical teaching of Jesus gripped the soul of the Rabbi as no miracle could have done. Each new revelation of truth more firmly established his faith in Him as the Messiah. Resting in the love and mercy of God as revealed in the parables of Jesus, he returned with his friend Tharah to Judea.

Going south, they rested for a time on the banks of the river Jordan. Becoming conscious that they were looking on the very waters in which Jesus was baptized and consecrated to His mission on the earth, the men rose and uncovered their heads. In the moment of rapture, they thought they heard what they never had heard before, a voice out of the silence:

“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

*The Lord is my light and my salvation.—Psalmist*





## SEVEN

### KERZIM THE PERSIAN

**H**E SAT, WITH THREE OLD MEN, before an altar on which burned a taper as the emblem of Ahura, the Persian's god of light, the creator of goodness and the guardian of humanity.

When an hour of meditation had passed, the worshippers bowed reverently, and sang their evening hymn to the ineffable light. To the three old men the singing of the hymn expressed adoration for the highest attribute of Diety, which, they believed, existed in Ahura. To Kerzim it was the soul's cry for a clearer light than he had known.

The young man had heard the fathers describe an unusually brilliant star seen in the heavens more than thirty years previously, and their journey to

the village of Bethlehem where they found the young child whose birth, they believed, was heralded by the star. That night when they had sung the hymn, one of the fathers replied to Kerzim's question concerning the Child:

“My son, he was born under a brilliant star incident to the conjunction of two planets. For that reason he should have embodied the elements of light essential to existence. Observe, my son. If your heart cries for a farther reaching light than you possess, take the camels and go to the far west, and it may be that somewhere near the golden sunset you will see the new light.”

Finding in Bethlehem only the traditional spot where Jesus was born, Kerzim went to the village of Bethany, and there he built a small cottage in which he stored his load of curios. In the cottage he reared an altar, and on the altar he placed a taper that burned day and night as the emblem of Ahura.

One day a friendly neighbor informed the Persian that many of the Jews, even the scribes and Pharisees, had gone to Galilee to see a Nazarene who was performing many wonders for the people.

“They say His name is heard everywhere in Galilee. Mothers sing it to their babies. Children lisp it in their play. Young men and old men speak it everywhere, sometimes in the market, the office, the shop and the synagogue. They speak it in whispers, sometimes, but they speak it.”

Kerzim replied that he was not interested in a name, he was looking for light.

“Aye, man, and if what folks say is true you will see the light of His face on the shining sea of Galilee.”

Of the six men who had found Jesus, Herman was best prepared to be help-

ful to Kerzim. Both were outside the pale of Judaistic influence, and each struggled to free himself from his peculiar national conception of Diety.

One morning when Herman came to the seashore to bring a basket of fruit to Nahor, he saw Kerzim standing beside the sea, his arms spread toward heaven. He was singing the Persian's morning hymn to Ahura. As Herman listened to the song to the ineffable light, he recognized the singer as one of the followers of Zoroaster, known as Fireworshippers, and he knew he was looking for light. He listened to the Persian's story of his journey to Bethlehem, his search for the Child and his coming to Galilee to find the Prophet.

"I hoped to find light in the man they call Jesus, but this very morning I saw a blind man sitting at the roadside. If Jesus were the true light there would be no blind on the highroads of Galilee."

Herman assured the Persian that Jesus opened the eyes of every blind man who was brought to Him. He, himself, had seen Him in Capernaum give sight to one who was blind.

Kerzim went to Capernaum to sell his curios. While in the city he saw two blind men following Jesus, and heard them crying,

“Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.”

The blind men entered the house where Jesus was, and He touched their eyes and opened them. When they came out of the house, they told every one what Jesus had done for them. Kerzim heard their praises of the Prophet, and was overjoyed:

“He has opened the eyes of the blind. Surely father Helam was right when he said the Child Jesus should have embodied the elements of light essential to existence.”

On a subsequent journey through Galilee, Kerzim visited Bethsaida, a village near Chorazin. While there, he saw a company of men bringing a blind man to Jesus, who took him out of the town, anointed his eyes and restored his sight. That evening Kerzim found the man who had been blind, and heard his story of the miracle that Jesus had performed:

“How did He do it? He wet His fingers with His tongue and put them on my eyes. Then He told me to look up, and when I looked up I saw men as trees walking. Then He did it all the second time, and when I looked up that time I saw everything clearly.”

Kerzim reflected:

“This man was blind and now he can see. Jesus has opened his eyes. Is He not the light whom the fathers hoped I would find near the golden sunset?”

The Feast of Tabernacles was near, and knowing that Jesus would be there, Herman went to Bethany and invited Kerzim to accompany him to the holy city. The spacious court of the Gentiles afforded accommodation for all nationalities, other than Jewish, who desired to share the worship. A wall five feet high separated this court from the sacred parts of the temple. When Herman had led the way into the court of the Gentiles, Kerzim stood apart with folded arms and bowed head. He was listening to the voice that came from beyond the wall. He had heard that voice before, but never had it thrilled him as now:

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

To the follower of Zoroaster, light was the symbol of all that was glorious and eternal. Kerzim found the illuminating power of the Prophet's message

irresistible. Was not this the true Ahura, outshining the mere concept of light that hitherto had claimed his adoration?

One day when Jesus came out of the temple He saw a man who was born blind. Kerzim was passing with the crowd, and heard Jesus say that as long as He was in the world He was the Light of the world. Then he saw Him make clay and anoint the eyes of the man who was born blind. The blind man went to the pool of Siloam and washed, as Jesus commanded, and came seeing. Herman, who accompanied the Persian, remarked,

“Who but a Prophet of the living God who, Himself, is light could give sight to a man born blind?”

Kerzim doubted:

“Perhaps this man was not born blind. Let us go nearer to him and hear what he has to say.”

They heard the restored man's reply



to those who were pressing him for a false witness against Jesus:

“One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind. Would ye also be His disciples?”

The question appealed to Kerzim. This man was born blind and Jesus had opened his eyes. Should he, himself, not follow Him as the Light of the world? He hastened home hoping the light on the altar had gone out, as then he would know that Jesus was the true light, outshining even Ahura. When he entered the cottage, the light on the Altar was still burning. He continued to follow Jesus, although, for a time, he remained in the dimness of a spiritual dawn.

One day when Kerzim was in Jerusalem selling his curios, he became acquainted with Rabbi Benaiad. He was strongly influenced by the Rabbi's settled conviction that Jesus was the

Messiah. Benaiad went home with his alien brother hoping to influence him to fix his faith in none but the Prophet.

Knowing that the enemies of Jesus were determined to destroy Him, Kerzim and the Rabbi united to stand loyally for His defence. From the cottage in Bethany, they went to Jerusalem where Jesus was observing the Feast of the Passover with His disciples in a large upper room. The men waited outside in the shadow of the building. Since they could not follow Him on the highroads, and were not privileged to enter the upper room with Him, they felt a sense of utter loneliness. Would they never again hear His cheering voice? Would they never again feel the benign influence of His near presence?

As Jesus poured out His heart of love in farewell messages to His beloved apostles, and prayed the prayer that engirdled His world of believers, stone walls and barred windows could not imprison the influence of His sacred utter-

ances. It outreached the confines of the upper room and fell with sweet benediction on the hearts of the sorrowing men.

They followed Him to Pilate's judgment Hall. When they heard the railing of the infuriated Jews and their hoarse shouts to Pilate to crucify Him, Kerzim became uncontrollable. Trembling with emotion, he lifted his arms and demanded that Jesus be set free. The voices of the chief priests prevailed, and Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

They followed Jesus as He came out of the Praetorium, and when they saw Him falter under the weight of His cross, they would have given the wealth of worlds to have carried it for Him; but the soldiers laid the cross on one Simon who was coming out of the country.

Overwhelmed with grief, the two men stood on the brow of Calvary. Through the approaching darkness,

they saw the outline of a cross, blood-red! The head they had thought would be crowned with glory, was scarred with thorns. The way they had thought would lead to life, was ending in death. Enveloped in gloom darker than the deepest midnight, Kerzim turned away from the scene.

The five other men who had found Jesus were among the crowd that came to watch the awful tragedy, and went away smiting their breasts.

In observance of the Jewish law, the six men rested on the Sabbath. On the morning of the third day, they heard rumors that Jesus had risen from the dead. The women had seen Him, and He had talked with them. They heard, too, that His apostles had brought the word that His tomb was empty. Having seen the Prophet's power over death, they believed these reports.

Rejoicing in the hope of again seeing Jesus on their highroads and in their synagogues, Jason returned to cultivate

his fields, Tharah to sell his merchandise, Nahor to market his fish, Herman to export his figs and dates, Abidah to tend his sheep, and the Rabbi to teach his class of boys not eligible for entrance into the synagogue schools.

Kerzim was alone in deepening spiritual gloom. He found the silence and inactivity of the Sabbath depressing. He wandered here and there aimlessly.

On the morning of the third day after the crucifixion, he was wakened by a flood of light streaming through the east window of his room, and gilding every object in his sight. He rose and stood in the doorway of his cottage. The heavens and the earth were wrapped in mysterious light. The sun rose higher in unprecedented brightness, and the glow penetrated Kerzim's soul. Under the influence of the glorious morning, he thought of Jesus who had declared Himself to be the Light of the world. He hastened to

His tomb. He met Peter who shouted to him that Jesus had risen from the dead. He met the women who declared that it was true, for they had seen Him and heard Him speak. He looked into the tomb, and saw the place where the Lord lay. The Light that seemed to have gone out in the darkness of Calvary, had risen to inwrap the world in glory.

When Kerzim returned to his cottage, the light on the altar of his ancient god had gone out. He was thrilled with rapture, for then he knew that Jesus was the Light of the world.

*In Thy presence is fullness of joy.*

—PSALMIST





## *EIGHT*

### SEEING THE RISEN CHRIST

**N**OTWITHSTANDING the repeated assurance of the Master that he would rise from the dead on the third day, the news that he had risen seemed an idle tale to the Apostles. They refused to believe the women who had seen Him and heard Him speak. After he appeared twice to their company and talked to them they were fully convinced and had no doubt that he would meet them on a hill in Galilee according to promise. So they promptly returned home. The story that he was to appear soon spread from the Apostles to the multitude of disciples in Galilee.

The report reached our three devoted Galileans and their friend the Syrian, who occasionally met for spiritual fellowship. Now that Jesus was gone,

they were lonely and sorrowful. They missed the inspiration of his presence. They were satisfied that he had risen from the dead, and since this new report was circulated, they were cheered by the hope of seeing him again. He was to meet the disciples on a hill. What hill? Herman thought they might see him on Hattin, where the *Beautitudes* were spoken. They went there. Tharah suggested Hermon. They went there. Nahor suggested that Jesus would appear on a Nazarene hill. Since he was a Nazarene.

Laboriously they searched all these places, but did not see Jesus.

In one of their meetings, at Jason's home, he declared warmly:

"Jesus isn't in the grave, that's sure; but nobody knows where he is. One thing certain, He wouldn't want us to do nothing but roam about looking for him. We've got to get out and work for Him. The first thing he did was to perform a miracle and

He kept on performing miracles of all kinds. We've got to get out and do the same."

Tharah was greatly distressed:

"Jason, we should remember that we are not endowed with miraculous powers. We are ordinary followers of Jesus. It is ours to show His spirit and not to disgrace Him by trying to do things for which we are not prepared."

Jason's influence prevailed over Herman, and the two men set out early in the morning on a mission of healing.

They had not gone far when they saw a young man, hopelessly crippled, sitting at the roadside. Herman was able to exercise a strong psychological influence over the sufferer. When he commanded him to rise and walk, the young man actually took a step. Having made the frantic effort, he fell a helpless heap, at the roadside. Subsequent efforts to relieve him, revealed a more hopeless condition than before.

The two men returned to the other members of the group, humiliated by their failures, and repentent of their presumption.

Tharah, whose love was best expressed in service, had a new vision. One day when the men were in fellowship, he expressed his desire:

“We know that Jesus is not dead. Somewhere He is living. He loves us and is praying for us. Have we not felt the warmth of the resurrection light? Then let us go out at once and tell the world that He is risen from the dead.”

Every man gave a hearty response to this appeal.

There were many Greeks in Capernaum, descendants of the dispersion that followed the conquest of Alexander the Great. These curious-minded men recognized the group as followers of the Prophet whom the Jews of Jerusalem had crucified, and they questioned them

concerning His teaching and His miracles.

It was impossible for the men to speak moderately. Their souls were burning with resentment toward those who had committed the atrocious crime of crucifying their Leader. With this resentment was blended the triumphant joy resulting from His resurrection. The combination of emotions was overpowering. The men spoke loudly and excitedly, each eager that his testimony should be heard by all who listened.

A restless crowd surrounded the speakers. The scribes and Pharisees hurried to the scene of confusion, prepared to eject the men forcibly. Tharah ran to the garrison and appealed to the centurion whose servant Jesus had healed. The appearance of the Roman officer with his band of one hundred soldiers, had a most subduing effect on the excited mob. The guard conducted the group safely outside the city gates.

They were by the little sea of Galilee.

The fisherman was sure they would find Jesus walking on the beach or riding on the water. The little sea carried a freight of holy memories of Him, but He was not there.

Turning from the sea, they went inland. A crowd of hundreds of men and women were pressing along the high-road. What did it mean? Had He come? The four men hurried to join the crowd. On an elevation before them stood Jesus. Their hope had found fulfilment. Their joy had reached consummation. They were living a blissful moment in the presence of the risen Christ.

They thought of their friends in Judea,—Benaiad, the beloved Rabbi; Abidah, the dear old shepherd, and Kerzim, the gentle-souled Persian! They must go at once to tell them that they had seen the risen Christ.

It was a joyous meeting, and a happy time together in prayer and praise.

There was no room for doubt. The aged Abidah cried triumphantly,

“I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

To the seven devoted followers of Jesus, the future was unknown, but each had a premonition that they were together for the last time. With that intuition which, at times, possesses the sensitive soul, the Rabbi lifted his arms in blessing:

“The Lord watch between thee and me, when we are separated, the one from the other.”





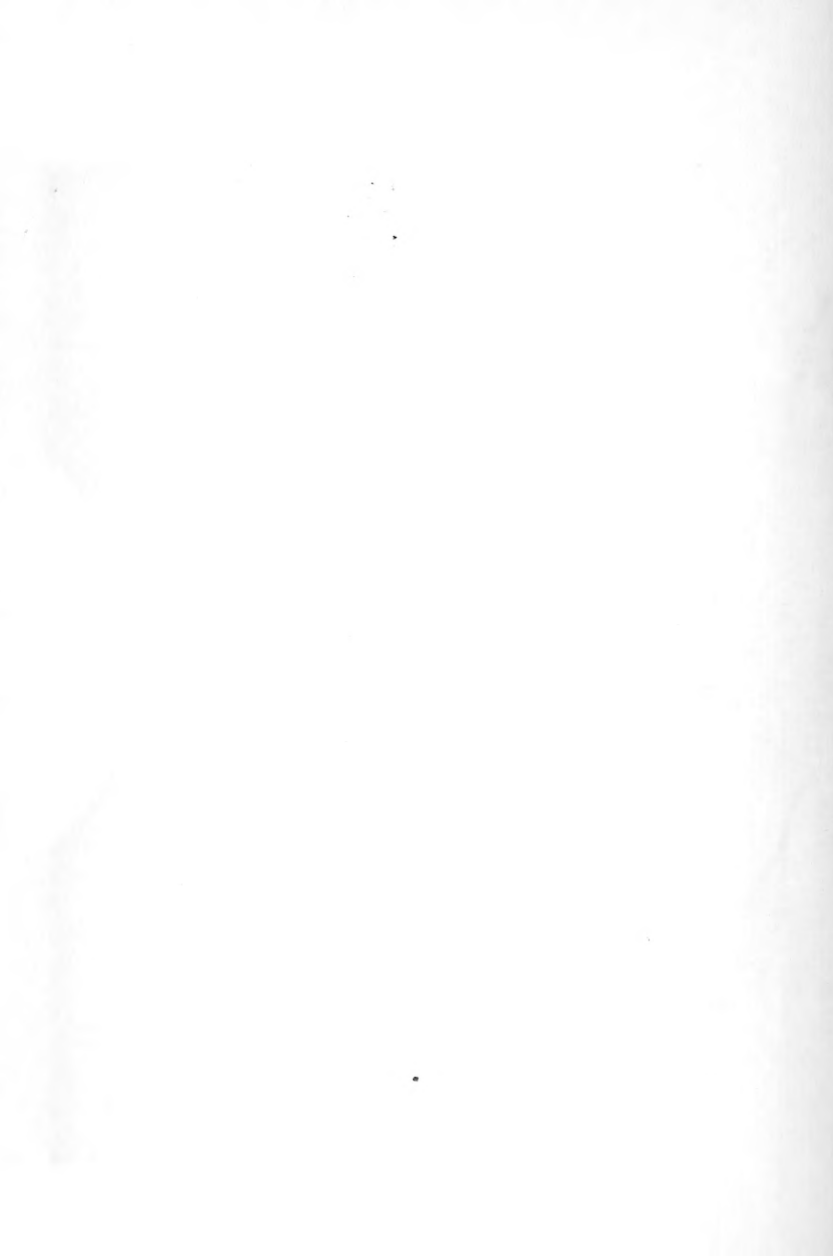
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